

Against the Grain

Volume 24 | Issue 1

Article 26

February 2012

Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

Debbie Vaughn

College of Charleston, vaughnd@cofc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Vaughn, Debbie (2012) "Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 24: Iss. 1, Article 26.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6096>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

The Middle East: A Guide to Politics, Economics, Society, and Culture (2012; 9780765680945, \$299) is another two-volume set worthy of consideration. Published by **M.E. Sharpe Reference** and edited by **Barry Rubin** of the **Global Research in International Affairs Center**, this reference attempts to explain a number of the major themes that contribute to the complex nature of this region so central to much of the world's current concerns.

However, unlike some other reference works that are primarily focused on the political and military conflict that has beset the Middle East, this work concentrates on significant themes that are often overlooked. The emphasis in these two volumes is on culture, religion, women, economics, governance, the media, and the differing peoples that make the region their home. Added to this, the structure and arrangement of this work is somewhat different. This is not a collection of short to mid-length entries arranged alphabetically but rather a set divided into seven parts containing topic-specific essays. The arrangement within each part varies with some, like those on governance, economics, media, and women utilizing both a topical and a country-by-country approach, while the parts on culture, religion, and the people of the region sort by cultural areas including Arabic, Persian, and Israeli or peoples like the Berbers, the Kurds, and Turkic minorities. Regardless, the essays in each part are substantial, and each of the seven parts also has an introduction that sets the stage for what follows. In addition, there are multi-citation bibliographies ending each essay that readers will find of real value in pursuing further research. Although there is a table of contents that provides a full sense of the structure and coverage offered, a good general index leads readers to specific information whether the interest is in subjects ranging from marriage and divorce to discrimination and human rights to the Internet and the impact of various Websites. The index also has a fairly extensive section of subcategories under each of the countries in the Middle East for those that want to pinpoint information about Egypt, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, etc.

The Middle East: A Guide to Politics, Economics, Society, and Culture offers lay readers and students a context in which to put contemporary events, hopefully making them more understandable. The essays are written in a straightforward, reader-friendly style that should engage upper-division high school students, undergraduates, and interested lay readers. Given the length of the articles, it is perhaps equally appropriate for circulating collections where patrons will have longer access. If shelved in reference it should be viewed as a complement and balance to titles like **ABC-CLIO's** *The Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: a Political, Social, and Military history*. (2008, 978-1851098415, \$395) and **Lynne Rienner Publishers'** *Encyclopedia of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (2010, 978-1588266866, \$395).

CQ Press/Sage has published a second edition of *Encyclopedia of the United States Census* (2012, 978-1608710256, \$175). The intent appears to be updating and clarifying our understanding of the background, purpose, and workings of this decennial event. After examining the book one comes to the conclusion that editors **Margo J. Anderson**, **Constance F. Citro**, and **Joseph J. Salvo** have succeeded admirably.

Given the recent changes to the way the information is being compiled, this second edition of the *Encyclopedia* has particular relevance. No longer relying on the long-form sample to accumulate the necessary "social and economic data," the census now uses the American Community Survey. The ACS is a "continuous measurement methodology" that samples the population on a monthly basis adding efficiency, increased response rates, and more reliable results. A thorough explanation of the ACS is provided in the very first essay in the *Encyclopedia* and offers a firm jumping-off point. Of course, other articles discuss the principle techniques, procedures, and mechanics required in census taking, there are also many that focus on issues and concepts, demographic results, census controversies, public policy context, and constitutional foundations. In addition, there are short articles providing "snapshots of the nation at each of the decennial censuses from 1790 to the present." Each article has a bibliography and relevant "see also" references. As you might expect, a number of value-added features are

included. Tables, charts, diagrams, and maps are used to good effect throughout the *Encyclopedia*. Appendices provide data on past census leadership, U.S. population and area figures from the 1790-2010 censuses, Congressional apportionment reflecting changes in the census from 1789-2010, the growth and cost of the census, sample census questionnaires, and the Standards for the Classification of Federal data on Race and Ethnicity. A glossary of terms follows these appendices with a useful index to specific terms and subjects ending the volume.

The *Encyclopedia of the United States Census* is a typical **CQ Press** production offering scholarly expertise in an accessible and well-designed reference. The entries here are full-blown essays that cover 140 topics, all written by scholars and experts familiar with the purpose, history, and function of the census. It is a top-notch effort that the editors and contributors can be proud of and that researchers in need of information about the census will welcome. Again, this is another title that could find a home in either circulation or reference. It will be of primary interest to academic libraries supporting courses in demographics and population studies, as well as public administration, political science, and policy studies. The *Encyclopedia* is also available electronically. For more information, search <http://www.cqpress.com/product/Encyclopedia-of-the-US-Census-2nd.html>. **CQ Press** is also providing an online guide to the American Community Survey at <http://acsguide.cqpress.com/>. 🌳

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

Column Editor's Note: Those connected to libraries of all types have very likely at least heard of **Michael Gorman** — among many other distinctions, he was the 2005-2006 **ALA** President and has been honored with a number of awards for his service to libraries and his support for access to information. For better or for worse, he is also known for his stance on the Google Books Library Project. In this month's **Monographic Musings**, **ATG** reviewer **Patricia Dragon** examines **Gorman's** recent autobiography, published by **ALA Editions**. Happy reading, everyone! — **DV**

Gorman, Michael. *Broken Pieces: A Library Life, 1941-1978*. Chicago: **ALA Editions**, 2011. 978-0838911044. 248 pages. \$35.00.

Reviewed by **Patricia Dragon** (Head of Special Collections Cataloging, Mtdata, and Authorities, Joyner Library, East Carolina University) <dragonp@ecu.edu>

Michael Gorman's Broken Pieces: A Library Life, 1941-1978 is the autobiography of a central figure in libraries of the past 40 years, from his boyhood in working-class England to his faculty position at the **University of Illinois**. It is stuffed full of vivid anecdotes from school days with teachers both repressive and enlightening, reflections upon his parents and childhood through adult eyes, and stories about a child's discovery of libraries as places to escape existence, and later, as the locus of a fulfilling career. These broken pieces add

up to a compelling portrayal of what makes the author who he is. Laboriously indexed and with meaty citations, it is also the work of a scholar detailing pivotal developments in library history in the 20th century, with particular reference to cataloging. Throughout, the earnestness of **Gorman's** passion for libraries is the central, unifying theme.

What stands out in **Gorman's** recounting of his early working days are the fascinating descriptions of his colleagues, reminding the

continued on page 41

MLA's essential standard guide for graduate students, scholars, and professional writers

MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing, 3rd edition

The third edition of the *MLA Style Manual* offers complete, up-to-date guidance on writing scholarly texts, documenting research sources, submitting manuscripts to publishers, and dealing with legal issues surrounding publication.

The third edition includes

- a significant revision of MLA documentation style
- simplified citation formats for electronic sources
- guidelines on preparing electronic files
- detailed advice on the review process used by scholarly journals and presses
- discussion of the electronic submission of a dissertation
- a fully updated chapter on copyright, fair use, contracts, and other legal issues

xxiv & 336 pp.

Cloth ISBN 978-0-87352-297-7 \$32.50

LARGE-PRINT EDITION

Paper ISBN 978-0-87352-298-4 \$37.50

*Join the MLA and receive
20% off the listed price.*

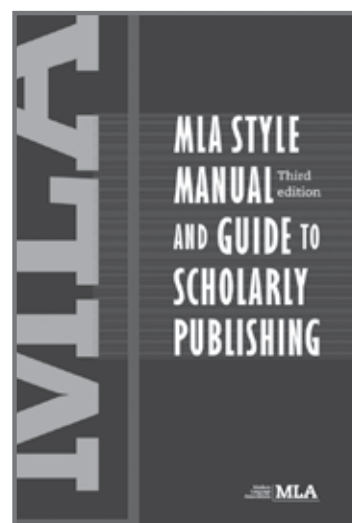
Modern
Language
Association

MLA

Phone orders 646 576-5161 ■ Fax 646 576-5160 ■ www.mla.org

"The bastion of scholarly publishing etiquette."

—Bookpage



Book Reviews from page 40

reader of the tyrannical library ladies and freethinking bohemians all librarians of a certain age have known. **Gorman** writes of one: "She wore the muted garb of an interwar bluestocking, and her dark and steel gray hair was arranged in a sort of straggling, tumbling bun secured by long pins. She had an intimidating habit of making points by stabbing the relevant papers with savage, bony fingers" (121). Although he also gives details about the technology with which he worked, for instance in a long description of the printing plates for catalog cards at **Hampstead Public Library**, it is clear that for **Gorman**, libraries are about the people, not the technology. It is impossible to imagine all the colorful characters whose personalities, wardrobes, and lunch preferences he lovingly describes being adequately replaced by the Internet.

The book exhibits an appealing blend of personal and professional. Several times, **Gorman** outright apologizes for not being the husband and father he should have been. He writes frankly about debilitating anxiety and nervous breakdowns. Family events appear regularly but briefly, almost tinged with regret, tucked in abruptly between descriptions of conferences and meetings and work and trips across the ocean. The blending of personal and professional serves to underline the central importance of his work to his life.

Gorman offers cogent criticism of library education today, derived from his own sharply different experience. The curriculum prescribed by the **[British] Library Association**, **Gorman** explains, was not simply vocational education, but was inherently closely allied to the needs of the profession. There was an ordered curriculum and general agreement on what the degree recipients should know when they graduate, unlike the programs of multiple tracks and fewer universal requirements that prevail now. Cataloging was central to librarianship, a status **Gorman** sought to preserve in his first years on the faculty: "I was determined to teach cataloging as one of the fundamental bases of librarianship, not as a specialized skill of use only to a few. I wanted the students to understand that cataloging was ... 'the way librarians think'" (162). Needless to say, **Gorman** laments the loss of cataloging from the central library curriculum.

For readers looking for juicy conflict, **Gorman** refers in advance to chapter 12 several times, calling it "the battle of AACR2." He explains that he segregated the material on cataloging into a separate chapter so that those not interested, presuming there are any who have read thus far, can skip it. The cataloging-phobic have no need to fear, however, since although he alludes to the radical changes, **Gorman** actually goes into little detail about them. He does give a succinct history of cataloging developments in the 20th century, describing how AACR2 arose out of movements for greater international cooperation such as the

ISBD, the rise of machine handling of records requiring certain kinds of standardization, the need for cataloging principles rather than haphazard examples, and the proliferation of formats other than printed books. The battle he describes centers on the conflict between the cost of implementation versus improved service to patrons.

Of course, **Gorman** is famous for his scathing criticism of certain library trends, and he does not disappoint in this realm, calling FRBR "a name more suited to a Beanie Baby than an ambitious cataloging standard" (197). He leaves no one guessing how he feels about RDA: "based on trendy chatter, gaseous assertions, and untested assumptions" (203), or metadata: "an inferior, unstandardized species of cataloging done by amateurs" (191). Although he often portrays himself as a man increasingly unable to recognize the world around him, a literary man in a digital world, **Gorman** is careful to stress that he is not against the prudent use of useful technology, but rather only technology for its own sake. He remains cautiously optimistic that libraries will continue to inspire and educate those who seek such things. His book is an inspiring read for all librarians and anyone concerned with the preservation of the intellectual record. 